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## **Author of Trafficking Victims Protection Act Accuses Obama of Unconscionable Abuse of Power**

Rep. Chris Smith

Statement to House Committee on Oversight and Government Affairs  
“HHS and the Catholic Church: Examining the Politicization of Grants”

December 1, 2011

A little over a decade ago, I authored the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TPVA) of 2000—the landmark law that created America’s comprehensive policy to combat modern day slavery.

Among its many mutually reinforcing provisions designed to **prevent** trafficking, **protect** victims and **prosecute** those who reduce people to commodities for sale—the three Ps—my legislation established the Health and Human Services grants program under review today.

For over a decade, we have achieved an amazing left-right, religious-secular, bicameral, bipartisan consensus, unified in combating sex and labor trafficking at home and worldwide without promoting abortion.

Until today.

In what can only be described as an unconscionable abuse of power, the Obama Administration has engaged in what amounts to bid rigging; denying taxpayer funds to a demonstrably superior organization—the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)—with an exemplary ten year track record of performance that scored significantly higher in independent HHS reviews than two of the three NGOs that got the grant.

Co-Chairman of: Alzheimer’s Caucus • Bi-Partisan Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism • Lyme Disease Caucus  
Coalition on Autism Research and Education • Global Internet Freedom Caucus • Bi-Partisan Congressional Pro-Life Caucus  
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Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs • Congressional Caucus on Human Trafficking



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The Obama Administration's discriminatory practice of funding NGOs that provide or refer for abortions even when they fail to win a competitive process is not only unjust, unethical and in violation of conscience laws (Weldon Amendment and Coats-Snowe), but it severely undermines public—and Congressional—confidence and support for what is an otherwise laudable program.

If you are a Catholic, or other faith-based NGO, or a secular organization of conscience, there is now clear proof that your grant application will not be considered under a fair, impartial, and transparent process by the Obama Administration.

The Obama Administration's bias against Catholics is an affront to religious freedom and a threat to all people of faith.

Let's not forget that the independent HHS reviewers found the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to have:

- “one of the most experienced national experts on human trafficking documented by program guidelines, development, research, direct service provisions”;
- a “comprehensive system in place...” that has assisted over “3,012 victims of trafficking and their family members from over 98 countries over the past ten years”; and
- “demonstrated strong partnerships” by engaging “with both faith-based and non-faith based organizations”.

And yet the Catholic organization was discriminated against solely because it fundamentally respects the innate value and preciousness of an unborn child and refuses to be complicit in procuring his or her violent death by abortion.

Even though HHS reviewers gave the USCCB a score of 89 compared to 74 for Tapestry and 69 for the U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), the latter two got the contracts.

Although HHS has thus far failed to provide the committee with all relevant documents pursuant to Chairman Issa's request, we do know that USCRI's proposal lacked detail on key program areas, had no plan on how objectives will be met and even lacked resumes for key staff, including the program director. The HHS review panelists stated:

“The overall level of detail in the proposal is insufficient to ensure that the project will be established and run to an effective level, and that the management plan is credible and comprehensive. There is a complete lack of information on specific activities, and the timeline is vague, inhibiting evaluation of their reasonableness.”

Why go through the charade of determining whether or not a grant application is meritorious when preferential treatment is afforded only to those in sync with President Obama's abortion promoting agenda?

The bottom line is this: pernicious pro-abortion favoritism, embedded in this egregiously flawed process, does a grave disservice to the victims of trafficking. Victims deserve better.

The women and children who have been exploited by modern day slavery need our help, which is why I wrote the law in the first place.